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A LETTER TO THE HOUSE of COMMONS;

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In which is ſet forth

The NATURE of certain ABUSES

Relative to the

ARTICLES of PROVISIONS,

Both with reſpect to

MEN and HORSES;

TOGETHER

With their REMEDIES.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ALMON, oppoſite Burlington Houſe, in Piccadilly. 1765.

[Price One Shilling].

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A

LETTER, &c.

Non mihi si centum linguæ, et totidem ora——

THE English of which is, that if a man had a hundred tongues, and as many mouths, they would not be sufficient to enumerate the many great abuses, frauds and exactions, committed daily by men of business throughout this great metropolis.

To you, Gentlemen, of the House of Commons, this Epistle is addressed, it being your duty, as the honourable servants of the people, to take all possible care to redress their grievances; and you would do well to consider yourselves to be chosen by their voice, as much for this purpose, as to provide for the exigencies of the state in voting supplies.

AND though, perhaps, the seeds of corruption and abuse, may so far be interwoven with all human affairs, that it may be altogether impossible for any government to eradicate them, yet when you perceive

abuſes riſing to an enormous height, even to ſuch, if not redreſſed, as muſt endanger the very exiſtence of the labouring part of the people, on whom the wealth and intereſt of a trading nation depend; it might not be amiſs to turn your thoughts a little thereunto.

THE particular grievance I would firſt recommend to your conſideration, is the affair of proviſions; namely, how it comes to paſs, that in ſuch a land of fertility as this, and in ſuch years of plenty, as we in general have had, they are riſen to ſuch a degree of dearneſs, that the labourer or manufacturer, who has a large family, can hardly find the means to furniſh them with the common neceſſaries of life. And what is very ſingular, cattle never bore ſuch a price at Smithfield Market, within the memory of the oldeſt man living; I mean, in the Michaelmas quarter, as betwixt laſt Michaelmas and Chriſtmas, tho' it is well known, there never was more herbage for the ſeaſon.

YOU have indeed, heretofore, given yourſelves the trouble to enquire into theſe matters, and have for that purpoſe ſent for, and examined ſome of the Smithfield agents, called Saleſmen, for your better information.

—That

—That having produced no effect, I beg leave to lay before you, what I deem the true cauſes of this evil, of which there are many, and then I ſhall offer to your conſideration ſome remedies, which you in your wiſdom may adopt or not, as you ſhall think fit.

SKILFUL ſurgeons hold it for a rule, that to go properly to work to cure a wound, it ſhould be firſt probed to the bottom——So then, if we ſearch for the fountain head of theſe evils, we muſt look for it amongſt you, and others, the landed men of property in this kingdom.

ALL or moſt of you are endeavouring to raiſe the rent of your farms, without conſidering that you help to conſume the commodities the farm produces; you raiſe your farm of 100l. to 110l. *per annum*, and eſteem yourſelves gainers by ſo doing; What is the conſequence? Why, you pay 25l. *per cent.* more, for every article with which you are furniſhed therefrom.

IT is in private, as in publick matters, juſt the ſame, you lay an additional duty on

beer, the brewer raiſes his price; you lay an additional duty on leather, of a penny *per* pound, and you pay a ſhilling and upwards the more for a pair of ſhoes —Thus you ſee the evil is retorted upon you, as the conſumer, whilſt the vender is acquiring more riches thereby.

THE next cauſe to be found alſo amongſt yourſelves is, that inſtead of letting your lands in ſmaller parcels as heretofore, you have laid together ſeveral farms into one; this you conſider as a matter of great œconomy, not only as it better ſecures your rent in a wealthy tenant, but becauſe fewer buildings, and of courſe fewer repairs are wanted on the eſtate.

BUT this, when properly weighed, is highly prejudicial to the public and yourſelves; becauſe the more diffuſive property is, ſo much the better for the State, and you do hereby put it in your tenant's power to become very opulent. Hence theſe Men are enabled to feed the markets as they pleaſe, or withhold their commodity for a time, till you and the publick are compelled to give whatever they demand for it.

BUT

But theſe are not the only evils conſequential of laying ſeveral farms together, for by ſo doing there is not ſo much grain produced in the land, communibus annis, as if they were divided into a greater number, becauſe the little farmer is obliged to work hard, and to cultivate all his lands to pay his rent; and this he can more eaſily do, becauſe his land probably lays within a nearer diſtance of his habitation; whereas a great farmer's lands probably extend ſome miles in length, and lay at too great a diſtance from his home ſtalls, to be ſo well and ſo conſtantly manured. Nor is it of much conſequence to the wealthy farmer, whether his crops are ſo abundant or not, becauſe the great quantities of land he occupies, enables him to have his price, or to ſtarve his neighbours.

Thus much for your ſhares in this evil.

The next cauſe will have its foundation in the ambition, and avarice, and extravagance of tradeſmen in general; and of a ſet of men, who, by their affluence or combinations, have engroſſed every article as far

as

as in them lies. With reſpect to Butchers meat, there are two ſorts of men who have done this, one are the Smithfield Saleſmen, the other the Wholeſale or Carcaſe Butchers.

THE methods whereby they do it, are as follow: Many of the Smithfield Saleſmen have in their hands great quantities of marſh or other paſture lands, and thoſe who have not can hire paſturage, ſo that they can eaſily withhold the cattle from the market, as beſt ſuits their own purpoſes; I ſay, purpoſes, for almoſt all them are dealers in live ſtock, as well as Saleſmen, and do frequently make excurſions twenty or thirty miles on the different roads to purchaſe for themſelves or not, as they ſhall find it beſt to anſwer the preſent ſtate of things. And they are enabled to buy up very conſiderable ſtock, and withhold it for a time, though perhaps men of little property themſelves, becauſe the ſeveral farmers in the country, for whom they are agents, muſt always have ſums of money remaining in their hands for cattle ſold, and that for a certain time, according to the diſtance they may happen to reſide at, or their deſigns of coming to town.

THE Wholeſale or Carcaſe Butcher does more, for he is not confined to the diſtance of a few miles about town, but you meet him in every part of the kingdom, and even in the Iſle of Wight, purchaſing not only at fairs and markets, but of every farmer and grazier he can deal with at his own houſe; by this means he ſweeps the country, no matter at what price, becauſe the retail Butchers in town muſt be furniſhed by the Carcaſe Butcher, or the Smithfield Saleſmen; hence it is eaſy to perceive, that theſe two ſets of men have it in their power, by their mutual agreement, to do almoſt what they pleaſe.

AND here let me not forget the modeſt gains of the retail Butcher, whoſe demand is nothing leſs than 50 *per cent.* for his ſkill in murdering and ſtripping an innocent animal. Let no man doubt the truth of this, you'll find it by experiment very true. For inſtance, ſell him a ſheep at 20 s. employ purchaſers to collect the whole again piecemeal, and you'll find the coſt amount to 30 s. it is the ſame with all other meat he kills.

PRAY,

PRAY, Gentlemen, Is there any reaſon in the world, why the Labourer and Manufacturer, the indigent Clergy with their numerous families, the Soldier and the Seaman who hath fought your battles with zeal and fortitude, ſhould be half ſtarved and ſacrificed to the ambition or avarice, or extravagance of theſe men, in whoſe profeſſion there is no ſkill required, but ſuch as hunger would learn their brother ſavages in half an hour. The retail Butcher, indeed, may ſuffer ſome loſſes, in having ſome of his meat grow ſtale and putrid in the ſummer before it is ſold. But I will be bold to ſay, ſuch loſſes are amply compenſated by the ſcanty weights they make uſe of.

BE that as it will, the fifth quarter, as it is called, has been always deemed a ſufficient profit for the Butcher till lately, and is ſo ſtill in the country; and it is in your breaſts to determine, whether three pounds for killing a bullock that coſt twelve, is not profit ſufficient for any Butcher to get for his trouble.

Look into every other article of food, you will find them equally riſen in price, ſo that the poor have no reſource; for which evils there are many remedies.

1ſt, The Wholeſale or Carcaſe Butchers, ſhould be conſidered as Engroſſers and Foreſtallers, both which they certainly are, and therefore no harm at all can accrue to the publick in ſuppreſſing theſe men entirely, who are found to be oppreſſive to the publick. If it be objected, that without theſe men the town could not be ſo well ſupplied with proviſions; I anſwer, that every commodity that cannot be vended in its own country, and for which there is any poſſible conveyance, will always find its way to that market where it can be ſold.

The next remedy I would propoſe is, not to ſuffer any man to follow the two profeſſions of Saleſman and Grazier; but ſuch ſhould be obliged to quit one of them, and to execute the laws againſt Foreſtalling the markets with the utmoſt ſeverity; and if the laws in being are not ſufficient to anſwer

the purpoſe, to enact ſuch as ſhall deter the moſt audacious.

A CERTAIN price might be fixed on all Butcher's meat, at the London markets, according to the ſeaſon of the year, or for a term of years, which, on an average, could be no detriment to the farmer, one fertile year compenſating for the unfertility of another; and though proviſions of the ſame kind differ much in their goodneſs, the price might ſtill be fixed to each kind of meat, none to be ſold for more than *per* pound, leaving it to the purchaſer to diſtinguiſh betwixt the goodneſs of the commodity, and to buy as he chuſes, the better or the inferior, which latter, will of courſe be valued accordingly.

No Farmer ſhould be ſuffered to occupy more than acres of land, unleſs it be his own property; except ſuch as have terms of leaſes unexpired.

WITH reſpect to opening or ſhutting the Iriſh Ports; there can, I believe, be no reaſon in the world given, by any one man, that

that would ſpeak and think, with as much ſincerity, about the publick intereſt, as of his own. — Why the Iriſh Ports ſhould ever be ſhut at all; the only true reaſon I could ever form to myſelf for ſo doing, is, becauſe our law-makers in England are underſtood to be men of landed property; and they, I gueſs, are afraid of keeping open the Iriſh Ports, leaſt it ſhould leſſen the value of their own Engliſh lands: but this is falſe reaſoning and falſe policy; becauſe, as commerce increaſes, wealth will increaſe too. Hence the inhabitants of Ireland will, in time, be able to contribute as largely, as the Engliſh, towards the ſupport of that government, under whoſe protection they live; hence numbers of them, who are driven by mere poverty and neceſſity to wander over every part of the globe, will find employment and ſubſiſtence at home; the ſubjects of that part of the kingdom will be greatly increaſed, and the commonwealth be ſtrengthened thereby.

But how wretched ſoever the policy of former times may have been in this reſpect, it ſhould be conſidered, that the public good

is the only good to be aimed at; and that perhaps there never was ſuch a thing heard of in any kingdom upon earth, except Great Britain, as that the profeſſed enemies of any nation, ſhould be ſupplied with proviſions from a part of it (without which they could not conveniently carry on a war againſt it, or perhaps not at all) merely for want of liberty to vend ſuch proviſions at home amongſt their friends and brethren, the children of one mother, whoſe intereſts relatively to the whole are one and the ſame.

And now becauſe the Britiſh ſeas, to uſe Mr. Blake's own words, are an inexhauſtible ſource of plenty, I beg leave to ſet down my thoughts on the ſubject of Fiſh; being perſuaded it might, with proper management, be rendered the cheapeſt food of any for the Poor, even at the London Markets, though great pains have been taken to make it appear otherwiſe. I remember the time, within twenty years at moſt, when the largeſt and freſheſt, and beſt of Macarell, uſed to be ſold in London at three and four for ſix-pence; and all other kinds of Fiſh in proportion. —— Do the ſeas abound

leſs

leſs in Fiſh than heretofore; or ſhall we ſay with Mr. Blake, they are an inexhauſtible ſource of plenty; if ſo, he would do well to inform us, why they are ſold, even by himſelf, ſo much dearer than formerly, now the conveyance on all roads is more open? Mr. Blake not being the firſt perſon who has brought Fiſh to London by Land-carriage for years paſt — Or will it be ſaid, we want hands to take them?

But not to talk of what has been, let us talk of things as they now are. And here I beg leave to inform the ſaid Mr. Blake, that what I am going to ſay carries not with it any ſpleen to him, being myſelf no Fiſhmonger, my only motive the love of Truth, and a deſire to ſerve the Publick, caring nothing about the price myſelf, it being a commodity I dare not eat, and to whom it is quite indifferent, whether I dye worth a hundred pound, or a hundred thouſand.

Being a Suſſex man, and going frequently to the ſea-ſide to bathe for my health, I have reſided at different parts of the coaſt for

for a conſiderable time; and having little elſe to do, my curioſity led me, commonly in a morning to the Beach, to ſee the fiſhing boats come in; and hence I could not help knowing at what price things were uſually ſold, which of courſe would vary a little according to their ſucceſs.

Now the Fiſh that moſt abound on the coaſt of Suſſex in the winter ſeaſon, at which time they are cheapeſt alſo, and ſo will come more ſeaſonably to London, when all other things are there deareſt, are as follow, viz. Whiting, Herring and Skait; and there are a great number of fiſhing-boats along the coaſt from Bright-Helſtone to Selſey Iſle, and more might be employed, if they could find a market (becauſe theſe ſeas are an inexhauſtible ſource of plenty) all which places are within ſixty miles of London, or a little more.

On this coaſt, a boat with two men, ſhall very commonly take ten thouſand Herrings in a night; inſomuch that the country people buy them ſo cheap, and are in a little time ſo glutted with them, that the Fiſher-

men,

men, for want of a Market, think it not worth their while to go out to take them.

WITH reſpect to Whiting, I never ſaw nor heard that they were ſold for more than ten pence a ſcore at Bright-Helmſtone, or on the Suſſex coaſt, after the ſummer company had left it. — From ſix-pence to ten-pence a ſcore is the common price. — This ſcore of Whitings ſhall weigh ten pounds; which, at the higheſt price, is no more than one penny per pound.

SKAIT on the ſame coaſt abounds to a great degree; and it is but very lately, that the country people, or the fiſhermen, would eat of them at all, unleſs compelled by the neceſſity of hunger. — Of courſe ſuch Fiſh is to be bought exceeding cheap on the Beach; but we will, if you pleaſe, ſet it at one penny per pound, which is as much again as it will yield there.

HERE now are three ſorts of fiſh to be had in plenty, and it is very eaſy to calculate what it will coſt brought to London.

WE

We will take it for granted, that Fiſh Machines, of the ſame conſtruction, might be had in Suſſex as elſewhere; the Poſt-maſters, I think. if they had a conſtant trade eſtabliſhed, would as willingly furniſh them, as they do poſt chaiſes, and they would find their accounts in it juſt as well. ——But if they would not, in order to ſhew the world what may be done with reſpect to bringing theſe fiſh from Suſſex to London; I will ſet down the particular expences of ſuch an undertaking.

For example; I buy four Fiſh Machines, ſuch as Mr. Blake's. If his are the beſt, one of which I always keep at the ſea-ſide, Bright-Helmſtone, or elſewhere, no matter what place; if there are boats ſufficient to furniſh one Machine a day, and a turn-pike-road leading to town, the other three are coming and going.

The fiſh caught in Suſſex are generally landed in a morning about eight o'clock, and ſo of courſe would come very freſh and early to the London markets the follow-

ing

ing morning; and I well remember the late Duke of Richmond uſed to have his fiſh, for his own table in London, brought up by his own domeſticks.

At the rate of four miles an hour, my Machine will reach London in twenty hours or leſs; the ſlower I travel, the leſs the fiſh will be hurt, and the horſes of courſe may draw a greater weight.—Any two ordinary horſes will draw ten hnndred at the rate of four miles an hour; but if that be thought too great a weight, we will ſet it down eight hundred — And to make the moſt of the road expence, we will call it ſeventy mile from the Suſſex coaſt to London.

Now ſeventy nine-pences is two pound twelve ſhillings and ſix-pence; ſeven ſtages, allowing each poſt Boy one ſhilling, encreaſes the expence to two pound nineteen ſhillings and ſix pence; eight hundred weight of fiſh, at one penny *per* pound, comes to three pound ſix ſhillings and eight pence; ſo that advancing one penny *per* pound more for the carriage of my fiſh, I

have ſix ſhillings and ſix-pence left to pay the turnpikes.

HERE then is eight hundred weight of fiſh brought to London very early in the morning, at two pence *per* pound. Let us now enquire what other expences are wanted? Why, I ſhall want an agent at the ſea-ſide every morning, for two hours, to load my Machine, and pay the fiſhermen, for which I will allow him twelve ſhillings a week; and hundreds there are, honeſt and careful men, who will think themſelves exceedingly well paid at that price.

IN London I ſhall want a ſhop for ſale, which I will ſet at twenty pounds *per annum*, and two men, at two ſhillings and ſix-pence a day; and thouſands I could get at that price very ſufficient to ſcrape and clean my fiſh, and deliver them to the buyer. I ſhall want alſo a crier, whom I will pay twelve ſhillings *per* week.—We will ſay the ſeaſon for theſe fiſh ſhall laſt twenty weeks, ſo then I have an increaſed expence in my fiſh, as follows: For Rent one pound a week; for two Men one pound ten ſhillings; for an

Agent

Agent at the ſea-ſide twelve ſhillings; for a Crier twelve ſhillings; in all three pounds fourteen ſhillings *per* week.

And now, becauſe the ſeas are often ſo boiſterous, that the boats cannot go out a fiſhing.—I am not to expect my Machine at London every day; but, on an average, I may expect it four days in a week.

Having ſhewn that I can bring up my fiſh at two-pence *per* pound; I will now lay a penny *per* pound more on my fiſh to defray theſe laſt expences; and what loſs I may ſuſtain by fiſh left unſold, tho' one would think, that if Mr. Blake finds it worth his while to keep ſuch a number of Machines, which he certainly is too wiſe to do, if it did not anſwer; I might reaſonably ſuppoſe, that I ſhould ſell my whole cargo of one Machine; namely, eight hundred weight four days in a week.

But not to be too preſumptuous about what I ſhall ſell, I will allow one hundred weight to be left on my hands each day.

——Now then we will caſt up the account, and ſee how it ſtands

A. B. Debtor for thirty-two hundred weight of Fiſh brought to London, at two-pence *per* pound	26	13	4
Weekly Expences for Rent, &c.	3	14	0
A. B. Creditor for twenty-eight hundred weight of Fiſh, ſold at three-pence *per* pound	35	0	0
Weekly ballance in my favour	4	12	8

This will pay for my Machines the firſt winter, if the Poſt-maſters will not find them, and put money in my pocket.

In this account there is, I believe, no fallacy with reſpect to the expence of the undertaking.

But moſt things are rated in the higheſt manner, much more than they will coſt, particularly the price of fiſh on the coaſt, and the diſtance of miles, and moſt probably

bly with reſpect to the loſs of each day's ſale—And, I think, if I could get money with one Machine ſo managed, no man will ſupppoſe, but that a number of Machines will increaſe the profits, whoſe cargoes are properly placed in this metropolis, to be ſold at three-pence *per* pound.

BUT if three-pence *per* pound be thought too much for the poor to give, a law might be made to oblige the Poſt-maſters to carry fiſh at ſix-pence a mile; and, it is plain, it could not hurt them, becauſe many publicans, on many roads, do advertiſe their poſt chaiſes at ſix-pence *per* mile; beſides, it would be leſs hurtful to their horſes to travel at a moderate rate with fiſh, than to be hurried along by impatient travellers.

As I ſaid before, I have greatly over-rated the price of theſe fiſh on the coaſt of Suſſex, ſo that eſtimating it at a proper medium, and ſuppoſing it to be brought up to town at ſix-pence a mile; theſe ſorts of fiſh might be ſold on an average in London for leſs than two-pence halfpenny *per* pound, if it could be carried on diſintereſtedly, or without

out making it a private jobb; and yet I believe there would be a cheaper way of ſerving this town with ſome ſorts of fiſh, particularly Herrings, becauſe theſe fiſh are ſold rather cheaper about Margate, and ſome parts of the Kentiſh coaſt, than on the Suſſex coaſt, from whence they might be brought by water cheaper too than by land-carriage.

HAVING now ſhewn what may be done; let us enquire what is done in this matter.

WITH reſpect to the Fiſhmongers, every body knows their exactions are infamous and intolerable; and it is a reproach to the Legiſlature not to cruſh them entirely, and deviſe other means of ſupplying the town. —Theſe men ſhould be deemed the greateſt enemies the Commonwealth can poſſibly have; when it is conſidered, that the conſumption of fiſh in this iſland ought, above all other things, to be encouraged; as it would afford a conſtant employment to a number of ſeamen; and be a nurſery for thoſe, who are the ſtrength and bulwark

of

of the nation, without any expence to the publick; and who might be called forth on any ſudden emergent occaſion, which perhaps may come ſooner than we expect.

LET us next enquire what Mr. Blake has done; he calls himſelf the diſintereſted ſervant of the public; tells you, he has no profit, but a great deal of trouble for his Publick-ſpiritedneſs, and plague and vexation from the Fiſhmongers. All this may be very true; But what has he done? Why he has lowered the price of ſeveral ſorts of fiſh, and introduced others little known before in this town. — 'Tis very true, he has ſo,—But as Mr. Blake ſells his fiſh, one of theſe three things will be true alſo;—— Either that he greatly overſtocks the markets with his fiſh, or that he does not know how to go to market; neither of which one can eaſily imagine; or elſe his profits are exceeding great, and himſelf not quite ſo diſintereſted as he pretends to be, ——I will ſhew my reaſons.

1ſt, His Herrings are ſold at a penny apiece; his Whitings, thoſe of two to the pound,

pound, from eight pence to fourteen pence *per* pound; others in proportion. His Skait at ſix-pence *per* pound; crimped ditto at one ſhilling *per* pound. The beſt Prawns, which may be had at Chicheſter at ſix-pence a hundred, are ſold by him at two ſhillings and two ſhillings and ſix-pence *per* hundred. Salmon, which may often be bought at Glouceſter for two-pence *per* pound and leſs, and brought up by the coach for one penny *per* pound more; never ſold by him whilſt freſh for leſs than ſix-pence or eight-pence *per* pound. His Cod often at one ſhilling *per* pound, not ſo freſh, nor ſo good, as that ſold by the Fiſhmongers the ſame day for eight-pence. His Mackarell often for more money, than many of thoſe people who buy at Billingſgate to ſell again, and hardly ever ſo good.

And now when you have well conſidered thoſe matters, and regulated the price of proviſions for men, it might not be amiſs to look a little farther, and regulate alſo the price of Provender for horſes. —— Becauſe their uſe and labour is greatly concerned in almoſt all kinds of manufacture, trade and buſineſs,

buſineſs, or at leaſt in the conveyance of the materials from place to place. But if the intereſt of the nation, relatively to its trade, ſhould not induce you to pay any regard to this laſt article, one would think that your own private intereſts would awaken you from that deep lethargy you are fallen into with reſpect to this particular; becauſe the horſe equipage makes a very conſiderable part of the expence of moſt men of property. —— But it is very poſſible, that you may not be well acquainted with the various exactions and impoſitions you are ſubject to; I mean in this great city with reſpect to the article of Horſe Provender. —And therefore I will ſhew you ſome of them.

First, If you keep your horſe in your own ſtables, and entruſt your man John to buy hay and ſtraw; though we all know that ſervants in general are very careful and honeſt, and regardful of their maſters welfare; yet here and there, by chance, a ſervant may happen to prefer his own intereſt to his maſter's; and may think he has a right to ſtand with the far-

mer five ſhillings for a load of ſtraw, and ſeven ſhillings and ſix-pence for a load of hay, for his ſkill in chuſing it, which to be ſure is reaſonable enough; but then this helps to raiſe the price at market, and elſewhere; becauſe farmer Nokes tells his neighbours, that he ſold his hay and ſtraw for ſo much money to my Lord Stokes.

In the next place, there hath of late years crept into the hay-markets, a new kind of gentry, called Saleſmen; theſe men endeavour to outdo each other in the laudable ambition of who ſhall ſell for moſt money; and very ſenſible it is, becauſe ſuch are moſt likely to have the moſt cuſtomers amongſt the farmers.

Now in conſequence of the high prices, that have been paid for the articles of hay and ſtraw, moſt of theſe hay farmers about London are grown rich, and ſo of courſe are not obliged to ſell on any particular day. Hence it is, that the Saleſmen have been able more effectually to bring about their own and the farmer's purpoſes, by perſuading the latter always to have two carts in London,

London, one laden for the market, the other empty, to carry home dung, in caſe the commodity is not ſold; ſo that unleſs you come up to the Saleman's price, his anſwer is, No, Sir, I ſhall ſet it up till next market-day.

THUS the Conſumers are obliged, ſooner or later, to comply with their demands from mere neceſſity.

BUT what is ſtill more ridiculous, there is but one hay Saleſman in the whole market of St. James's, at leaſt it was ſo very lately; but who is himſelf a farmer, and reſides in the country, and occupies land.

LET us next conſider the affair of Oats.

OATS that uſed to be ſold for half a guinea *per* quarter, are now ſold from fourteen to eighteen ſhillings, and upwards. What is the reaſon, why the people, who were originally factors for the farmer, and ſold his Oats by commiſſion, are now turned merchants; theſe men, grown rich by their devices, have their agents in all countries,

from whence there is any navigation to London, who are directed to buy for their uſe, at certain times, all the Oats they can lay hands upon, inſomuch, that ſome of the countries, where Oats grow in great abundance, are obliged to be furniſhed again with what they want from Bear-key.

HAVING bought their quantities in the country, and filled their ſtore-houſes, they encourage importation, and lower the price for a ſeaſon, make ſham ſales to each other, and ſwear to the prices; and ſo, by every kind of art and much perjury, they at length get the port of London ſhut againſt the importation of foreign Oats, under a pretence, that the price is too low to pay the farmer the expence of tillage, rent, &c.

THE ports once ſhut, remain ſo by law or cuſtom for ſix months; and then theſe worthy gentlemen begin their harveſt; at once they raiſe the price two or three, or four ſhillings *per* quarter, juſt as it pleaſes them; and who can hinder it.—When by their opulence they have drained the little farmers, have engroſſed all they can, and by

by their perjury have obtained the ſhutting up of the ports——And I appeal to the whole world, whether the ſhutting up the ports againſt the importation of foreign Oats, under a pretence of their being ſold too cheap to pay the farmer's expences; and then immediately raiſing the price two or three, or four ſhillings a quarter, is not a ſufficient proof of the artifices of theſe men; becauſe the facts do manifeſtly imply a contradiction in themſelves.

But this is not their only profit; for they buy of the farmer nine gallons to the buſhel, and ſell to you by the buſhel of eight only.—Here is two ſhillings a quarter more profit, when Oats are ſold for ſixteen ſhillings *per* quarter.

These things being undoubtedly true, and once known, I ſhould be glad to aſk you, How you, who make the laws, can tamely ſit down, and ſuffer a ſet of raſcally Engroſſers to lay a Tax upon your Eſtates of four ſhillings *per* quarter at the leaſt; and ſometimes ſix ſhillings for every quarter of Oats you conſume for ſix months in the year.

year. — Compared to which the Taxes you pay in ſupport of the Government, are a mere trifle.

THE nature of theſe Evils once known, the Remedies can be more eaſily applied; and though I pay a much greater deference to your wiſdom in theſe matters, than to my own opinion. I beg leave to ſet down my thoughts.

1ſt, SUFFER no man to buy up Oats to ſell again at any market. Oats once brought to London and ſold, ſhould not be allowed to be expoſed to ſale again at the publick markets.

LIMIT the number of Factors at Bear-key, who ſhall be allowed to ſell by commiſſion only, entering in a book each day kept for that purpoſe the price of the commodity ſold, for whoſe uſe, and in what quantity, under the ſevereſt penalties if not true. Or you may fix ſuch a price upon Oats for a term of years, as will be ſufficient on an average to defray the farmer's expences of cultivation, &c. none to exceed

per

per quarter, leaving it to the buyer to diſtinguiſh about the goodneſs of the commodity. —Or enact a law, that the Port ſhall be opened once in three months, inſtead of ſix, under the ſame limitations as it now ſtands.

THUS things will return into their former channel, and the Corn find its way to that market where it is wanted, without being firſt ſent to London, and brought back again into the country, and paſſing through ſo many hands, if the Factor is not allowed to follow the two profeſſions of Saleſman and Merchant.

IF it be objected, that in a free ſtate theſe things are not to be done, becauſe it is taking away the natural liberty, that every ſubject has of trading for himſelf, — It ſhould be conſidered, how far that liberty, as it is called, is conſiſtent with the intereſt of the community; and if found otherwiſe, it ought to be aboliſhed; for that liberty, or that law, which ſuffers a few to impoſe on many to enrich themſelves, becomes an act of oppreſſion, and reflects diſgrace on the Government that permits it; beſides the innumerable

numerable inconveniencies it muſt in time produce to a trading nation.

WITH reſpect to the ſale of Hay and Straw, there can be no kind of pretence for Saleſmen here; becauſe the farmer, who lives within ſuch a diſtance of the London market, as to ſend his commodity thither by his own carriage, can come himſelf, or ſell it by his domeſtick ſervant, who drives his horſes; and therefore you ought at once to aboliſh the Hay Saleſmen, and oblige each farmer to depart the market with his goods at a certain ſtated hour, upon forfeiture of the ſame. And thus I am told it uſed to be heretofore.

LET us now conſider the caſe of the farmers themſelves, I mean ſuch as live near this great city, many of whom are worth from ten to thirty thouſand pounds.

THESE, by their wealth, help to controul the markets for Hay and Straw, by purchaſing what they can from the leſſer farmers; for which reaſon, no man that uſes any land himſelf, ſhould be ſuffered to purchaſe to ſell again on any conſideration.

THEY

THEY do more, they hold their meetings at certain times, and come to a reſolution together, not to ſend any of their Hay or Straw to market, till it gets up to ſuch a price. And if a ſurvey was now made round the town, at the houſes of the great farmers, you would find immenſe quantities of Hay untouched. —— They declare openly, they will not break bulk till it will yield more money.

AND under a pretence of ſcarcity, they are determined to have Straw at what price they pleaſe. Straw that uſed to be ſold for 4 d. a truſs, is at this time ſold for 10 d. and they ſay it will be worth from 1 s. to 1 s. 6 d. *per* truſs; and ſo every butcher in the country, and every man that has a little money to lay out, and an empty barn, is buying up Straw, in order to get *cent. per cent.* as the town fills.——This is no ſecret, but is known to every body except yourſelves.

WITH reſpect to the huſbandman, I am ready to grant, that he is a very uſeful mem-

ber of the community. But, pray, Gentlemen, when you and your anceſtors let your lands to them, Did you ever propoſe to make them your maſters? Was it ever thought of, in the original inſtitution of agriculture, that the huſbandman, who rented 300 *l. per ann.* ſhould be enabled to live better than his landlord, who had no other income—and yet this is now certainly the caſe—and you will find the evil become greater every day, unleſs you put a ſtop to their practices, there being no limits to the avarice of mean and ſordid minds.

But ſome men will, perhaps ſay, liberty is the ſoul of trade, and that trade and wealth flouriſh beſt in a land of liberty; 'tis very true, they do ſo; but as the extreme of virtue deviates into vice, ſo liberty abuſed, becomes a licentious outrage; and it is not trade or liberty you are to lop, but the abuſes which have ſprung from the parent root.

So then, when you have put down the Saleſmen, and have made the law to prevent any man's purchaſing Hay and Straw to ſell again, who uſes any land. If theſe Remedies ſhould

ſhould not anſwer, you will have nothing left for it, but to deal with the farmer himſelf; who, if he knows no bounds to his rage of profit, ought to have them preſcribed to him.

And many of you having land in your own hands, you will eaſily enough judge, what profits a farmer ought to have; and therefore you may, as I ſaid before, fix a price upon their commodities of every kind, if you pleaſe, for a year or more, as you ſhall ſee fit, according to the fertility of the year; and you may oblige all farmers, who live within ſuch a diſtrict of this city, to bring a certain quantity of each commodity to ſome of the markets, once a week, according to the ſize and nature of their farms and live ſtock, leaving ſo much in their Hands for their own conſumption, or to be reſerved for another year, if they chuſe it; and to prohibit at the ſame time the breaking up of all lands now in graſs within ſuch a diſtance of town, or elſe you do nothing—and as to the farmers throwing up their lands on the enacting ſuch a law, there would no evil conſequence with reſpect to the community

attend it at all; becauſe it is very certain, that where one man would be ſo weak as to quit his farm, there would be ten ready to take it.

Let us now look back upon the prices of laſt year, with reſpect to Hay and Straw, and Oats. Hay ſold till Midſummer and after, from three pounds eight ſhillings to three pounds ſixteen ſhillings *per* load; Straw from nine-pence to one ſhilling *per* truſs; Oats from ſixteen ſhillings to twenty *per* quarter; and yet it is manifeſt there was no real want of either; for though the preceding year had been very different from ſome others in reſpect of the growth of Hay, on account of the great drought—yet I believe no man ever went to market, but found he could be readily ſupplied for his money. Of Oats there could be no want, becauſe the ports were ſhut up againſt importation in October laſt, which of itſelf implies a plenty.

Of Straw, there was no want, becauſe nothing was ſo common, after the company left town, as for an Innholder or Stable-keeper to have half a ſcore Farmers or Jobbers with him

him in a morning, to know if he wanted Straw.

I KNOW it may be urged, that there are more horſes kept than formerly, and ſo of courſe theſe things muſt be dearer; to which I anſwer, that if there are more horſes kept, which I hardly believe, for hunting is almoſt laid aſide, which was once in great vogue, yet the cultivation of lands has increaſed more than the breed of horſes. —But if that be not ſo, this is ſtill a fact, that there is no real deficiency in theſe articles, becauſe you may always be ſupplied for your money.

THESE things premiſed, the caſe of the Innholder and Stable-keeper requires your attention.

As to the Innholder, he helps to raiſe the price of Oats, and would give eighteen ſhillings a quarter (or at leaſt perſuade you to think he does give it) rather than give fourteen ſhillings, becauſe he then demands threepence a quartern for his Oats, and this is now become a cuſtom almoſt over the kingdom,—

for

for which reaſon, amongſt other things, it ſhould be enacted, that no Innholder ſhould ſell his Oats for more than two-pence a quartern, as it uſed to be, and this will help to keep the Oats at the uſual price; and as he ſells you about a quart of Oats for your two-pence, inſtead of a quarter of a peck, it would not be amiſs to fix a ſtandard meaſure for all perſons ſelling corn of all ſorts, under ſevere penalties, if any other meaſure is found in their poſſeſſion.

LET us next conſider the caſe of the Stable-keeper.

HE is allowed ten ſhillings and ſix-pence *per* week for keeping your horſe; we will, if you pleaſe, calculate his expences in ſo doing, and we ſhall be better able to draw ſome true inferences therefrom.

EACH horſe muſt be allowed fourteen pounds of hay a day, and he cannot do well without it, ſome will require more—fourteen pounds of hay for a day, is ninety-eight pound for the week, and the hay-bands, which are of no uſe, will weigh at leaſt two

two or three pounds more—We will ſplit the difference of Price betwixt three pounds eight ſhillings, and three pounds ſixteen ſhillings——and call it three pounds twelve ſhillings, tho' the beſt is always the cheapeſt; this will come to for hay *per* week 0 3 6

Midling Oats at ſixteen ſhillings, of which he is allowed one peck a day, is *per* week 0 3 6

For Straw, the cheapeſt at nine-pence, two truſſes *per* week, and he cannot do with leſs 0 1 6

I will allow one man to look after nine horſes, which is full as much as he can do—here is an increaſed charge *per* week of 0 1 0

No man has his ſtall in London for leſs than forty ſhillings a year; and I believe he ſeldom has them filled forty weeks, ſo that we may reaſonably ſet each ſtall at one ſhilling *per* week, which charge amounts in the whole to ten ſhillings and ſix-pence.

Besides which, he is to find Curry-combs, Bruſhes, Forks, Halters, Shovels, Wheelbarrows, Main-combs, Bedding for Servants, Sheets, which they occaſionally cut for Clap Clouts, Brooms, Buckets, Candles, Scouring-paper, &c. not to forget ſome bad debts, which he is ever ſure to make.

This account is no ways aggravated, any man who keeps horſes in his own ſtables, will eaſily know whether this calculation be juſt or not.

Now what follows, why certainly one of theſe things, either that the Stable-keeper is out of pocket, or elſe he cheats your horſe of his proper food; but this latter cannot be done, unleſs amongſt the inferior Stable-keepers, who do all the ſervile offices of feeding, &c. themſelves—becauſe a man who values his credit or his intereſt, would not chuſe to put it in the power of every dirty raſcal he has employed, to talk of the frauds committed in his ſtables, if he ſhould at any time think proper to turn him away. Well then, he that does your horſe juſtice, muſt

muſt be out of pocket; but that cannot continue long, and he muſt raiſe the price of keeping your horſe, for no man will think it worth his while, if able, to follow a profeſſion by which he is a loſer, unleſs he ſees a proſpect of ſome end being put to the enormous prices of theſe articles, which I will be bold to ſay never will again happen, unleſs they are by the Legiſlature laid under ſome ſort of regulation.

THUS, whether you keep your horſes at home or at livery, or travel on the road, the evil falls on yourſelves, beſides, the great difference the price of Horſe-provender makes in almoſt every article of trade.

Now the maxim which ſays, every man robs in his way, may, I think, be allowed a very true one; therefore, it is to be hoped, that your Honours will deem it reaſonable, either to put a ſtop to the frauds and exactions, and methods of robbing committed by Farmers, Saleſmen, and Engroſſers, and ſome others that might be named, or elſe to give a general licence to every indigent man to rob on the highway, or to pick

pockets, or to uſe any kind of coſenage his genius is beſt adapted to, provided he does it with civility, which arts are in the eye of ſtrict and impartial juſtice (ſuch as we may ſuppoſe the divine juſtice to be) all equally honeſt, and ſo all induſtrious men will be upon a par, or elſe I don't ſee how numbers of his Majeſty's ſubjects will be able to ſubſiſt much longer within this realm.

FINIS.